

Organized
1933



Member
A.N.A.

New Jersey Numismatic Society

MEETS THE THIRD MONDAY OF THE MONTH AT THE MADISON, N.J. PUBLIC LIBRARY except July and August

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A Brief History of the New Jersey Numismatic Society

prepared by Arno Safran

Part One: Numerical Order of Meetings

The first meeting of the New Jersey Numismatic Society occurred on October 27, 1933, in Maplewood, New Jersey. Charles F. Nettleship, Jr., the Society's founder, was selected as Chairman and Gladys Wade as Recording Secretary. As reported in the *Numismatist* of December, 1933, collecting specialties of the charter members included U.S. silver dollars and half dollars, foreign copper and silver coins, Civil War tokens and Merchants' cards; also Lafayette items and British coinage. The topic for the second meeting to be held November 22, 1933 at the Secretary's home is "What I Consider My Most Interesting Coin." Present at the first meeting were Messrs. Harris, Hermeth, Nettleship, Wade, Nixdorff, O'Malley and Miss Wade.

Facsimiles of the *Numismatist* reporting on this charter meeting proceeding through 1967, along with a wide range of *Minutes* beginning with the 388th meeting of April 13, 1967 and continuing through December 9, 1976 were culled from the archival material presented to me by Immediate Past President Christopher Connell. Enough material from that time to the present has enabled me to reconstruct the numerical order of meetings to this day. Numerous errors have been observed and corrected. While a few mysteries remain as to why these errors were never observed, let alone discussed, I am firmly convinced that this report, subject to a careful audit, will provide our current members with a fairly accurate figure as to the number of meetings the Society has held.

It is apparent that the Society met twelve months a year, at least through its 100th anniversary meeting which was celebrated in January, 1942. On October 14, 1943, the NJNS held its 10th Anniversary meeting with a dinner at the Newark Athletic Club in which thirty-seven members and guests were present. (More will be written on this event and others of significance in another part of this chronicle.) The 125th meeting was reported as having taken place on March 9, 1944 which would indicate that at some point between December, 1941 [Pearl Harbor] and March of 1944, the Society missed one month.

The 150th meeting took place on May 9, 1946, again at the Newark Athletic Club. Since this milestone occurred in May and not in April, only 23 meetings were held during this two year span. In February of the following year, the 158th meeting took place suggesting that the Society was now holding meetings 11 months out of the year. In May, 1948, the Society held its 173rd meeting honoring 90 year old George Blake, one of its early and most active members. (Thus, the Society was now meeting 12 months a year again.)

The 199th meeting was held on July 13, 1950; the 250th on October 15, 1954, the 325th on February 9, 1961. On September 12, 1963, the NJNS held its 356th meeting thereby completing its 30th consecutive year as a numismatic body. If these totals are accurate; and they appear to be; the Society missed a total of only four months during this thirty year span. (30 X 12= 360.)

The next mention of the NJNS, as culled from the Society's archives, appears in the May, 1967 ANA BULLETIN which reports on the 388th meeting having taken place on March 14 of that year; this time at the Military Park Hotel in Newark. At this meeting, Robert Schonwalter gave a talk on the "Second Revolt", explaining how newly discovered hoards and documents found in caves of the Masada Range had brought new

facts to light; some of which may be gleaned from the coins of that era. At that meeting, he displayed a number of shekels which were overstruck on Roman coins.

It is not until the March, 1970 issue of the ANA CLUB BULLETIN that one again sees a meeting number listed for the NJNS; (at least from the files now in my possession); this for the 416th meeting held January 8 of that year. From its 388th meeting back in May, 1967 through the 416th on January, 1970, 28 meeting took place within a 32 month period indicating perhaps that no meetings were held during August of 1967, '68 and '69 with the possibility of a cancellation of one due to inclement weather during one of the winter months.

At this juncture in our chronicle, we must move to the *Minutes* which were recorded by James A. Brown whose first entry as Secretary to the NJNS, -at least from the records I have at my disposal,- appear in the April, 1961 edition of the *Numismatist* reporting on the 325th meeting of February 9. Brown's tenure as Secretary was perhaps the longest in the history of the Society. He is still acting in that capacity as of the December 9, 1976 meeting; the final entry in my possession, until the October 12, 1978 meeting announcement sent out by Ernie Keusch, now President of the Society.

It is during the period of Mr. Brown's service as Secretary that errors in the ordinal number of our meetings begin to appear. The first occurs with the January 13, 1972 meeting. For December 9, 1971 the number is listed correctly as #436, but in January, the digits become slightly reversed with the meeting now being designated as #347; a minus 90 drop. This goes unnoticed until Mr. Brown himself, corrects it in the Minutes of May 11, 1972 when he lists the event as Meeting #441. (No harm done as all is well again!) During this period, the Society is not holding meetings during July and August and is meeting at the Mills Building Recreational Center in Montclair with Joseph Litvany is the President.

The second error occurs when the meeting for November 9, 1972 is recorded as #444, the same as the previous meeting held October 12. This is not corrected and goes unnoticed; [*not even by our own Ernie Keusch who is inducted as a new member during the December 14, 1972 meeting.*] This is further compounded by a typo appearing in the *Minutes* of the March 8, 1973 meeting in which the Number "8" for Meeting #448 is listed as a "3". Somehow, this is picked-up two months later, corrected, but still remains one meeting number off from the previous error. On October 11, 1973, there is no mention of the fortieth anniversary of the Society. (Dr. Stanley Sherr is serving in his first year as President.)

It is with the April 11, 1974 meeting that the most serious error occurs with respect to the numbering of meetings. Whether it be the impending April 15 income tax deadline or other matters not available even for conjecture, Mr. Brown subtracts 100 numbers from the total between March 14 and the said April date. Like the previous error of a single digit, inexplicably, no one the Society observes this, with the result that the numerical order for the meetings is now off by 101. (The problem occurred eight months before Herb Silberman becomes President along with Ernie Keusch as 2nd Vice President.)

As a result of another numerical typo, that of a 5 instead of a 3, the meeting numbers become off by 99 instead of 101; this occurring with the *Minutes* of the October 9, 1975 meeting. Like the others, the error goes unnoticed through the December 9, 1976 meeting in which Ernie Keusch is elected President of the NJNS. This seminal meeting is recorded as Meeting #387 but should be listed as #486; the very same number given years later for the meeting of November 16, 1981 with James Heath as President.

To ascertain how all this came about, one must return to the meeting of April 13, 1978. In the meeting notice prepared by then President Ernie Keusch, he lists it as number 447. Between December 9, 1976 and April 13, 1978 just sixteen months had expired. At the most, the meeting number for the latter should have been recorded as #403 still remaining off by 99; its actual number being #501. Where did Ernie come up with number #447 for the April, 1978 NJNS meeting? When the gala celebration of our so-called 500th meeting occurred on January 17, 1983; that numerical event had long receded into the distant past.

Beginning with the April, 1978 meeting, notices to members are numbered from the #447 figure on a fairly regular basis. However, it should be re-emphasized that the #447 is inaccurate and as stated earlier, is actually #501. The difference between the two figures comes to 54. Therefore, by adding the latter to the latest figures, we should arrive at the most accurate number.

On January 17, 1983, the Society celebrated what they believed to have been their 500th meeting. By then we were meeting in our present home; the Helen Chase Memorial Room at the Madison Public Library. on the third Monday of the month. Harry Resigno, then President, issued Souvenir Cards to the members in attendance. These featured a \$10.00 National Bank note from Madison, New Jersey. Ernie Keusch was the

featured speaker that evening and his subject was *U.S. Assay Medals*. (Sound familiar?) In reality however, this was meeting #554.

With Harold Flartey installed as President, in 1985, the club was again holding meetings during the summer months. On July 15 of that year, Mal Heckman, presented a talk on Byzantine coins. (Little did we know, what would be forthcoming from that humble beginning.) The meeting number given by Harold was based on the Keusch revised numbering system and was listed as #530; but in reality, #584. From 1986 on, the Society has held no meetings in August. The renowned "600th" at Rods in Morristown, was really the 654th get together and took place on November 18, 1991. Thanks to the efforts of Charles Davis, President, the event was as memorable as it was enjoyable.

At our January 20, 1992 meeting Mark Auerbach reported that the numbering of our meetings may be as much as 100 meetings off. (He, no doubt, had discovered one of the errors alluded to earlier.) This was the first time any mention of the accuracy of these numerals were called into question. At the February 17 meeting, Mark reported more of his findings, revealing some discrepancies as reported in the *Numismatist* between 1961 and '70; that the NJNS met only 10 times a year during the 1970's and that the Hacketstown Coin Club for a time, referred to itself as "formerly the NJNS." (dates not given). For the first time, a dual number is assigned this Feb. entry; as #603/643 on the front, but in the Minutes of the 2/17 meeting which accompanied the April 20 Notice, the number 743 is appended. All are wrong. The latter of course, is way off the mark, [no pun intended] With the March 23, 1992 Meeting Notice, the dual numbers now read #604/655. Actually it is more than likely, #657. The difference however, has been reduced to 2, thanks to Mark's efforts. The further update of the two extra numbers is explained by the various aforementioned instances which occurred during 1973 and '74.

From this point on, meetings were held 11 times each year, (September through July); the one exception being the meeting of Jan. 12, 1994 which was canceled due to a blizzard. From the preceding, we may draw the conclusion that the January 16, 1995 meeting of the NJNS was officially its 687th. If noted researcher, numismatic scholar and writer Bob Julian comes to speak before us, as expected, at our April 17, 1995 meeting he will be joining us in celebration of meeting #690. Weather permitting then, our 700th meeting of the Society should occur on March 18, 1996.

Respectfully submitted,

Arno Safran
President, NJNS
March 20, 1995